

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Brian Duncan on 10/21/09, 10/22/09 and 10/23/09.

The application has been amended as follows:

In the Specification:

Specification has been amended as follows:

[0038] Figure 13 is a top view of the storage ring according to Figure [13] 12;

[0039] Figure 14 is a lateral view of the storage ring according to Figure [13] 12;

[0040] Figure 15 is a detail view according to Figure [15] 14 with deposited wafer;

[0042] Figure 17 is a perspective view according to Figure [17] 16;

[0043] Figure 18 is a lateral view according to Figure [17] 16;

In the claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A device for storing plate-shaped substrates the device comprising:

a plurality of consecutive storage elements stacked in a stacked direction, each storage element accommodating at least one substrate, each of said storage elements comprising

an outer ring-shaped stacking area and a plurality of holding elements connected to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, each of said holding elements extending from said outer ring-shaped stacking area in a an upwardly and radially inward direction with respect to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, said plurality of holding elements being offset from said ring-shaped stacking area with respect to said stacked direction, said at least one substrate being arranged on said plurality of holding elements, the inner diameter of the ring shaped stacking area being greater than the diameter of said substrate;

a means for depositing a substrate in each of the storage elements;

a tool for selectively opening the stack of storage rings, having a first storage element contact surface and a second storage element contact surface, said first storage element contact surface engaging a first storage element; a moving means for moving said tool relative to said stacked storage elements;

a moving means for moving said tool relative to said stacked storage elements;

a control unit programmed for moving said tool via said moving means with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element such that said second storage element contact surface engages a second storage element adjacent said first storage element, wherein said control unit controls said moving means such that said tool divides said plurality of stacked storage elements into an upper stack of storage elements and a lower stack of storage elements, said first storage element being located at a spaced location from said second storage element when said second storage element contact surface contacts said second storage element, said control unit controlling said moving means such that said moving means moves said tool with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element

and with said second storage element contact surface engaged with said second storage element such that said second storage element is located at a spaced location from said upper stack of storage elements and said lower stack of said storage elements, to enable access a single said substrate in the stack of the storage elements; and

a stacking area defined by an area of one storage element in contact with another storage element in a stacked formation.

6. (Currently Amended) A device in accordance with claim 1, wherein the plurality of holding elements means for depositing comprises inwardly and upwardly directed projections for engaging engage said substrate such that said substrate is deposited above a ring section of the storage element.

Claim 16 – Cancelled.

28. (Currently Amended) A device for storing plate-shaped substrates the device comprising:

a plurality of consecutive storage elements stacked in a stacked direction, each storage element accommodating at least one substrate, each of said storage elements comprising an outer ring-shaped stacking area and a plurality of holding elements connected to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, said stacking area having an upper stacking area surface and a bottom stacking area surface, each of said holding elements extending from said outer ring-shaped stacking area in a an upwardly and radially inward direction with respect to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, said plurality of holding elements being offset from said ring-shaped stacking area with respect to said stacked direction, said at least one substrate being arranged on said plurality of holding elements, the inner diameter of the ring shaped stacking area being

greater than the diameter of said substrate, said upper stacking area surface of one storage element engaging said bottom stacking area surface of an adjacent storage element;

 a means for depositing a substrate in each of the storage elements;

 a tool for selectively opening the stack of storage rings, having a first storage element contact surface and a second storage element contact surface, said first storage element contact surface engaging a first storage element;

 a moving means for moving said tool relative to said stacked storage elements;

 a control unit programmed for moving said tool via said moving means with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element such that said second storage element contact surface engages a second storage element adjacent said first storage element, wherein said control unit controls said moving means such that said tool divides said plurality of stacked storage elements into an upper stack of storage elements and a lower stack of storage elements, said first storage element being located at a spaced location from said second storage element when said second storage element contact surface contacts said second storage element, said control unit controlling said moving means such that said moving means moves said tool with said first storage element contact surface engaged with said first storage element and with said second storage element contact surface engaged with said second storage element such that said second storage element is located at a spaced location from said upper stack of storage elements and said lower stack of said storage elements to enable access a single said substrate in the stack of the storage elements; and

 a stacking area defined by an area of one storage element in contact with another storage element in a stacked formation.

Claims 30, 31 – Cancelled.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1-13, 15, 17, 20-23, 27-29 allowed.

Reasons for Allowance

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

Claims 1, 28 – Closest prior arts [(Kyouno (US 2002/0018703), Harda et al (US 5,112,641)] do not teach claim limitation “each of said storage elements comprising an outer ring-shaped stacking area and a plurality of holding elements connected to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, each of said holding elements extending from said outer ring-shaped stacking area in an upwardly and radially inward direction with respect to said outer ring-shaped stacking area, said plurality of holding elements being offset from said ring-shaped stacking area with respect to said stacked direction, said at least one substrate being arranged on said plurality of holding elements, the inner diameter of the ring shaped stacking area being greater than the diameter of said substrate”, “a tool for selectively opening the stack of storage rings”, and “the control unit programmed ----- to enable access a single said substrate in the stack of the storage elements” in the context of remaining limitations of the claim.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled “Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance.”

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to RAKESH DHINGRA whose telephone number is (571)272-5959. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:30 - 5:00 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Parviz Hassanzadeh can be reached on 571-272-1435. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/R. D./
Examiner, Art Unit 1792

/Parviz Hassanzadeh/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1792